

Real Achievement Matters!

Fact Sheet on the RAM Initiative

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities at West Chester University of PA

WHAT: The RAM initiative (Real Achievement Matters) is a new program at West Chester University, bringing students with intellectual disabilities, ages 18-24, to campus in very small numbers (2-4 students), to participate in a two year inclusive post-secondary education experience. The RAM initiative is 'inclusive' in that RAM students would learn, live, and interact with all students, faculty, staff and administrators on campus, not in segregated environments. The students take classes on an Audit or Credit basis and have a non-traditional application/admissions process. These students are full time students, have full privileges of the university, and are eligible for Pell Grants and Federal Financial Work Study programs (if financially eligible).

WHO: Students with intellectual disabilities are those who have significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviors which covers many everyday social and practical skills" (AAIDD, 2017). These students come to the college experience without a traditional academic diploma, nor standardized test scores. We focus on students ages 18-24, who have completed at least 4 years of high school. These students would have been in special education and have had an Individualized Education Program during their school years. These students will not be in high school based transition programs during their time at WCU; they will have completed these program or opt out.

WHY: Individuals with intellectual disabilities have better employment outcomes when they attend post-secondary educational experiences.

Inclusive opportunities with similar age peers provides a positive quality of life experience and 'finding' yourself, just like all other students coming to college.

Independent living skills are practiced in real life settings.

VISION: Provide inclusive post-secondary education to students with intellectual disabilities, who meet certain criteria, in order to develop citizens who are independent and economically self-sufficient and to meet the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act of equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.